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[Article 1.](#)

Bloomberg

Don't Be Fooled by Iran's Charming New Leader

Jeffrey Goldberg

Sep 30, 2013 -- OK, if it's Monday, it must be skunk-at-the-garden-party time.

There are two main reasons to doubt the possibility of an Iran-U.S. rapprochement, an idea that gained new life after Iran's charm offensive at the United Nations last week and a phone call between the presidents of the two countries on Sept. 27. The first is general to the Middle East, the second is specific to Iran.

The general reason is easy to understand, and all-encompassing: Nothing at all works in the Middle East, so why should the U.S. find success convincing Iran to give up its nuclear program in exchange for lifting sanctions?

Think about it: Every great, complicated effort meant to bring peace or democracy or tranquility to the Middle East somehow goes off the rails. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process? A 20-year failure. The remaking of Iraq? Also broadly a failure. The effort to bring about an end to the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria? Failure. The entire Arab Spring? At the very least, a promise unfulfilled, and a bitter failure in many countries. The war to defeat Islamist terrorism? So far, a failure, despite intermittent tactical success.

Since nothing works in a zero-sum region where politics is defined by fanatics, I don't feel particularly optimistic about the current effort. I used to be more of an optimist, by the way, but this is what happens over time. It wouldn't be surprising, by next spring, if we saw the White House acquiesce to congressional demands for harsher sanctions on the Iranian regime, after several rounds of mostly fruitless negotiations.

The second reason is specific to Iran's actions last week. Many people are forgetting that Hassan Rouhani, the president of Iran and the commander of Operation Offensive Charm, is a moderate only in comparison to his predecessor, the unhinged Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Rouhani has been a superior soldier for Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a defender of the regime, and an anti-American propagandist for much of his professional life. (Not often mentioned during last week's love-in was Rouhani's post-Sept. 11 [commentary](#), in which he blamed the attacks on the "wrongs and mistakes of American policies," and argued that the U.S. Air Force shot down Flight 93, which crashed in the Pennsylvania countryside.)

There's no proof yet that Rouhani's ultimate goals for Iran are different than those of the hardliners. Let's look at what he didn't do at the UN last week: He not only refused to comply with the many Security Council resolutions demanding that Iran cease all uranium-enrichment activities, he also refused to endorse the idea that Iran is obligated to pay any attention to the Security Council's wishes. (Remember, the many resolutions demanding that Iran cease enrichment passed with the unanimous approval of the five permanent members.)

Until proven otherwise, there's no reason to think that Rouhani, who is acting on Khamenei's behalf, is ready to shut down his country's nuclear program, despite airy statements to the contrary. The Iranian leadership wants to maintain its ability to produce nuclear weapons while at the same time convincing the West to lift sanctions. So far, Rouhani's difference is one of style, not of substance.

Americans are easily charmed by smiling clerics, and Rouhani understands this. In 2007, he said, "We should talk carefully so as not to provoke the enemy, we should not give them any excuses."

Who is the enemy? The U.S. is the enemy. According to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Steven Ditto, Rouhani [wrote in 2003](#): "The fundamental principle in Iran's relations with America -- our entire focus -- is national strength. Strength in politics, culture, economics, and defense -- especially in the field of advanced technology -- is the basis for the preservation and overall development of the System, and will force the enemy to surrender."

Ditto, who has read much of Rouhani's voluminous output, says the quotation "encapsulates the overwhelming impression gleaned from Rouhani's history and writings: his identity as a revolutionary ideologue and defender of the Iranian 'System.'" Ditto argues that Rouhani is simply a cleverer tactician than some of his colleagues. "What separates Rouhani from traditional ideologues, however -- and what fuels perceptions of him as a 'reformist' -- is his belief that certain kinds of political and social reform can facilitate the defense, upkeep, and legitimization of the Iranian regime."

In other words, a pleasant phone call with the president of his chief adversary -- and the prospect of extended negotiations -- are legitimate if they help advance the goals of the regime.

"In light of this background, there will be no moral, political, or intellectual meeting of minds between Rouhani and the West," Ditto writes. "In an unusually candid May campaign briefing with Iranian expatriates, he claimed that while he does not wish to see an 'increase in tensions' with the United States, he has no desire to see a 'decrease' in them either: 'Today, we cannot say that we want to eliminate the tension between us and the United States... We should be aware that we can have interactions even with the enemy in such a manner that the grade of its enmity would be decreased, and secondly, its enmity would not be effective.'"

President Barack Obama seems somewhat enthusiastic about the possibility of real rapprochement with Iran. But Gary Samore, who was until recently Obama's chief adviser on Iranian nuclear issues, does not. When I spoke to him this morning, he was acerbic: "The Iranians are going to try to see how far they can get on charm alone."

That, for now, is the game.

Jeffrey Goldberg is a Bloomberg View columnist.

[Article 2](#)

The New York Review of Books

Iran Opens Its Fist

[Gary Sick](#)

September 30, 2013 -- He came to New York. He saw almost everyone. Hassan Rouhani, Iran's new president, may not have conquered, but at least he seems to have persuaded John Kerry and Barack Obama that his proposals for negotiating an end to the US-Iran conflict deserve to be taken seriously. When President Obama picked up his phone in the Oval Office on Friday to bid farewell to President Rouhani with the Persian phrase *Khodahafez* ("God be with you"), there was the sense that a tectonic shift between Washington and Tehran was taking place.

The Rouhani blitz was regarded by many cynics as nothing but a charm offensive. Of course, in one sense that is what it was. Rouhani dominated the media, with half a dozen one-on-one interviews, a well written and conciliatory op-ed in the Washington Post, a seemingly endless series of

meetings with curated groups of journalists, scholars, former US government officials, business executives, and a throng of his fellow Iranians, many of whom had taken refuge in the United States from the regime he represents. He spoke to the UN General Assembly (the ostensible purpose of his visit), to the Non-Aligned Movement (which Iran chairs), and to a collection of some two hundred members of the Asia Society and the Council on Foreign Relations at a midtown hotel.

I watched him in the two meetings that I attended and in most of his televised appearances. Rouhani is a man of considerable gravitas. He is serious, businesslike, and fully in command of his brief. Except for the formal speeches, he spoke without notes and responded directly and thoughtfully to the many questions directed at him. He spoke in Persian, except for an occasional English phrase, but he listened to his English-speaking audience without simultaneous translation, and his responses indicated that he grasped not only the words but also the nuances. Rouhani is a cleric, and he wears the robes and turban appropriate to his status. But he prefers to be addressed as Doctor Rouhani, in recognition of his PhD in law from Glasgow Caledonian University. Addressing members of New York think tanks, he reminded them that until recently he was one of them, running the Center for Strategic Research in Tehran. That, however, is only a small part of his résumé.

He was national security adviser to presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami, and he has been the personal representative of the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, for nearly a quarter of a century. In those capacities, and other senior posts, he has been associated with virtually every security and foreign policy decision made by the Islamic Republic of Iran since at least the end of the Iran-Iraq war in the late 1980s. Rouhani's close ties to Khamenei were on display as he prepared to depart for the United States. Khamenei appeared before the leadership of the powerful and conservative Revolutionary Guards Corps to remind them politely but firmly that their proper concern was national security, not politics. Since the Revolutionary Guards played a major part in undermining both of Rouhani's predecessors, this was a unique and unequivocal demonstration of solidarity. It does not, however, guarantee indefinite support for Rouhani's initiatives. The Guards and the senior clerical establishment will look for results and weigh their own interests. Thus far, Rouhani, with the help of

the Leader, has stayed ahead of his domestic and foreign opposition, but in New York he and his associates gave every indication of being men in a hurry.

Rouhani's decisive win in the June 2013 elections was not a result of his foreign policy experience. Rouhani was correctly perceived by many Iranians as the anti-Ahmadinejad. During his presidency, Ahmadinejad not only inflamed international sentiment against Iran with his belligerent rhetoric, associating himself with ugly conspiratorial thinking that doubted the Holocaust and speculated that the United States itself was responsible for 9/11, but he also surrounded himself with ideologues whose nativist convictions far exceeded their experience in both domestic and international affairs, leading to his country's acute isolation and a stifling regime of economic sanctions.

In the eyes of many Iranians, he also very nearly wrecked the economy by rejecting the advice of virtually every responsible economic voice in favor of his own eccentric and inflationary whims. In 2007, Ahmadinejad impulsively dissolved Iran's Management and Planning Organization (MPO)—the Iranian version of the Office of Management and Budget in the United States—because it clashed with his populist agenda. By the end of his term, and starting well before the worst of the recent international sanctions, Iran's inflation rate had risen to one of the highest in the world. One of Rouhani's earliest pronouncements was to reestablish the MPO. Ahmadinejad was also associated with the harsh crackdown on civil liberties following his disputed 2009 reelection, whereas Rouhani was regarded as sympathetic to the more tolerant policies of former president Khatami, whose strong endorsement of Rouhani during the campaign was crucial to his victory.

In the thirty-four years since the Iranian revolution, the Islamic government has lost much of the legitimacy it once enjoyed among large swathes of the population. In recent years—and particularly since the large-scale street protests of 2009—Iran's leadership has instead relied on repression to preserve its strength. The government's poor economic management, in turn, has amplified the perception among many Iranians that the system is no longer working. Iran has good universities that produce talented graduates. It has an entrepreneurial culture that seeks innovation. It has a well-developed industrial base, and at least until recently, it has had the

benefit of huge oil revenues. Iran produces much of its own armament, including even mini-submarines, as well as sophisticated electronics. Yet in recent years, few of the country's 76 million people have benefited from these resources. Job growth has stagnated, inflation has destroyed purchasing power and savings, and control of the economy has moved increasingly into the public sector. Typically, those at the top who control economic and currency policies are the ones who benefit. The middle and lower classes have suffered the most, despite Ahmadinejad's efforts to spread the wealth via direct payments to every Iranian family. Members of the younger generation find it dauntingly difficult to find jobs. Reluctantly, many leave.

As a candidate, Rouhani appealed to ordinary Iranians who felt that the Islamic Republic needs major reforms, with policies based more on pragmatism and talent rather than ideology and connections. He does not fit the classic profile of a transformative leader. He is a [consummate insider positioning himself as an outsider](#). That raises suspicions in the West, but it also means that he knows how to get things done. It is too early to tell if he can pull Iran out of the immense hole left by his predecessor.

It is easy to forget that President Rouhani and his foreign minister, Javad Zarif, have long experience negotiating with the West. Zarif headed Iran's cooperative efforts with the United States in 2001 that resulted in the installation of the Karzai government in Afghanistan. That brief period of intense and fruitful collaboration ended after only a few months when President George W. Bush inexplicably denounced Iran as a member of the Axis of Evil.

Zarif was also directly involved in drafting what has come to be known as the Grand Bargain memo in 2003. This memo, which can be [read online](#), spelled out Iran's understanding of the demands of both the US and the Iranian sides. It is far-reaching and is based on the acceptance of direct discussion between the two countries. On the crucial subject of weapons of mass destruction, Iran offered "full transparency for security that there are no Iranian endeavors to possess WMD, full cooperation with IAEA based on Iranian adoption of all instruments" dealing with IAEA access and inspection. The United States never responded to this memo.

President Rouhani himself was Iran's nuclear negotiator in 2003, when Iran suspended enrichment for nearly two years while engaged in talks with the

Europeans. A number of participants in those negotiations have told me that the Europeans were unable to get the Bush administration's approval, leading to their collapse. Both Zarif and Rouhani were later accused by hardliners in Iran of being naïve appeasers who mistakenly believed they could deal with the Americans. At that time, Iran was only beginning its nuclear program. A senior Iranian who was involved in those discussions told me this week that Iran in 2005, when discussions collapsed, was "willing to settle for two hundred centrifuges." Today, after a decade of futile pressure and sanctions, Iran has more than 18,000 centrifuges. So these two visitors from Iran have returned to offer a nuclear deal that bears more than a little resemblance to their offers of almost exactly a decade ago. Both bear the scars of their past engagement, which may help to explain the reluctance to rush into a very public handshake until they were more confident of a favorable US response to their overtures. Those doubts were apparently removed on Thursday, when US Secretary of State John Kerry met privately with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, without even notetakers present. In an almost surrealist touch, Zarif gave his first account of the meeting to his president only an hour or so later in front of more than two hundred applauding Americans in a ballroom of the Hilton Hotel. That event was capped the following day by the telephone call between the two presidents, which was first reported to the public in Rouhani's Twitter feed and then confirmed by President Obama in a public statement.

There is a long way to go, and each side will necessarily have to reexamine its maximalist positions in the course of what are certain to be difficult and complex negotiations. In addition to President Rouhani, the Iranian team is composed of graduates from the University of Denver (Foreign Minister Zarif), George Washington University (Chief of Staff Nahavandian), and MIT (IAEA Representative Salehi and Vice President Najafi), among others. This is the last generation of Iranian revolutionaries with deep knowledge of the West. As the Iranians emphasized in their private meetings, this favorable constellation of interests and individuals who are willing to take risks for détente in the wake of Rouhani's unexpected electoral victory earlier this year can never be repeated. President Obama, himself a lame duck, may feel much the same way.

In the next few weeks, there will be a barrage of assertions by international officials and commentators that the Iranian offer is a sham and should be rejected. Some of those comments will come from Israel and from the US Congress, but there will be others from Saudi Arabia and the Arab monarchies, all of whom fear a US-Iranian rapprochement as a threat to their own narrow interests.

The history of US relations with Iran is littered with missed opportunities, almost always rejected for misguided domestic reasons on the part of either Iran or the United States. While it is regrettable that the current discussions are starting ten years late, both presidents seem to recognize that they are now urgent. The dramatic change in tone is an important first step and was unthinkable before this year's Iranian election. But words are no longer sufficient. Both sides are preparing their presentations for the first serious negotiation of the new era in Geneva just two weeks from now. We shall see.

Gary Sick is a senior research scholar at Columbia University's Middle East Institute and an adjunct professor at the School of International and Public Affairs.

[Article 3.](#)

Spiegel

Obama's Ambitious Mideast Diplomatic Offensive

Dieter Bednarz, [Matthias Gebauer](#) and Holger Stark

9/30/2013 -- Barack Obama is moving his foreign policy course toward diplomacy and away from military intervention. Suddenly the Iranian nuclear issue and Israeli-Palestinian conflict are back on the table -- but is the Middle East ready for a breakthrough?

The historic moment was carefully choreographed. The foreign ministers of the five permanent member states of the United Nations Security Council, Russia, China, Great Britain, France and the United States, along with Germany, met at 4 p.m. on Thursday afternoon. After 15 minutes the host, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine

Ashton, called Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif into the recently renovated Security Council Chamber. The Iranians shouldn't feel excluded -- but they shouldn't feel too much a part of the global community either.

Zarif, who lived in New York for many years, dispensed with the usual polite remarks. He said that he didn't want to waste any time, and that much had changed in his country as a result of recent elections. He told the assembled members that his mission was to peacefully resolve the conflict over Iran's nuclear program. He even suggested a timeframe, saying that a compromise could be reached "within a year," and that his country was "determined to make this possible." After his remarks, Zarif met privately with US Secretary of State John Kerry.

The encounter could mark a turning point in the history of the Middle East. Only once in recent years has a US secretary of state met her Iranian counterpart, when Condoleezza Rice "exchanged pleasantries" with Manouchehr Mottaki, Iran's foreign minister at the time, in Egypt in 2007. Otherwise, the relationship between the two countries has been characterized by 34 years of silence since the storming of the US Embassy in Tehran.

Now the contours of a peaceful agreement with Iran are becoming recognizable for the first time. There are also signs of hope in two other areas of conflict. Last week, the Security Council agreed on a draft resolution establishing a timeframe for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. In addition, US President Barack Obama declared peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, along with Iran, to be a priority of his second term in office.

It took only a few words from Iranian President Hassan Rohani to usher in a new age: "Once the nuclear file is settled, we can turn to other issues."

A Changed Political Landscape

The spirit of optimism, which seems too good to be true for some seasoned diplomats, is made possible by the unusual conditions in two nations that now have more in common than it would seem at first glance. President Rohani leads a country that is economically shattered after years of severe sanctions. Iran seems ready to assume a different role in the world.

Obama also leads a country that has become tired, after more than 12 years of war, and is now yearning for a respite.

The American president began his second term with the intention of making the American economy greener and the middle class more resilient against crises. He wanted to regulate illegal immigration and bolster his healthcare reforms. His focus was "nation-building here at home," said Obama, reiterating a promise he had made when he was reelected in November 2012. But then came the NSA scandal and the chemical weapons attacks in Syria, and now Obama has reluctantly shifted his focus from domestic reforms to foreign policy.

With the planned destruction of Syria's chemical weapons, the hopes for putting an end to the Iranian nuclear weapons program and the overdue peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians, he placed three blockbusters of international crisis diplomacy on the agenda last week. Suddenly it seems as if Obama wanted to save the world, after all. What the New York Times called Obama's "evolving doctrine," which the president presented in his keynote speech at the United Nations, became an outline of the US president's foreign policy in his remaining years in office. It is not without substantial risk. It could turn Obama into a great statesman, a visionary who was able to at least partially pacify hot spots without military action. If it works, Obama will have earned the Nobel Peace Prize he was awarded in 2009. But his personal legacy isn't the only thing at stake. Obama is also risking America's dominant position, which has always consisted of a mixture of diplomatic strength and military superiority.

If Obama fails, he will not only lose his influence in the Middle East, but he will also have to accept that the threat of military violence against countries like Iran will lose its credibility, precisely because he so publicly chose to refrain from using such violence. In that case, as many Americans feel, he would be responsible for a disaster in foreign policy.

Return to the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

It was unexpected that Obama would try once more to take on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a challenge that had already proved too daunting for two Bushes, two Clintons and Obama himself. Expectations were low when Secretary of State Kerry brought the Palestinians and Israelis back to the negotiating table a few months ago. Kerry went to Tel Aviv, Amman, Ramallah and Cairo, spoke with all parties involved and issued both threats

and incentives. It looked like another secretary of state was wearing himself out over a conflict for which there seems to be no solution. Obama gave Kerry free rein. According to a diplomat from the State Department, the White House apparently reasoned that if Kerry failed, like all of his predecessors, it would be his personal defeat. Now the president has made the issue his own, perhaps because he realized that it would take the personal commitment of the world's most powerful man to lead the parties to compromise.

One reason this strategy is so risky is that Obama may soon be seen as a lame duck president, says Heather Conley, a policy expert who served as deputy assistant secretary of state. It is completely unclear how he expects to solve three major conflicts at once, conflicts that "have been ongoing for decades with little result," she says.

Shortly before his election in 2008, Obama quoted John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States: "[America] does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy," he said, noting that if she did, "she might become the dictatress of the world." Obama was strongly influenced by Adams' words. His advisers say that he still adheres to this view today. Last week, Obama spoke as if he intended to transport Adams' legacy into the modern age. He said that there was no longer a "Great Game" to be won, as there was in the Cold War, and added: "Iraq shows us that democracy cannot simply be imposed by force."

'Danger for the World'

The America that Obama recently described to the UN delegates does not intervene in the affairs of other nations to overthrow regimes. It seeks diplomatic allies and avoids the use of weapons, if possible. "The danger for the world," Obama noted, "is that the United States, after a decade of war ... may disengage, creating a vacuum of leadership that no other nation is ready to fill." But he added that there could also be exceptions that required military operations in the future.

According to former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, the president has drawn the right conclusions from past mistakes and has recognized that America's military campaigns have not achieved the desired results. "Haven't Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya taught us something about the unintended consequences of military action once it's launched?" Gates asks.

Iran's change of course comes at just the right time. The country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is giving newly elected President Rohani an unusual amount of latitude -- which is not altogether surprising, since the ayatollah is equally aware of how the tough sanctions have choked Iran's already ailing economy. This explains why Rohani was able to employ such a moderate tone in New York.

Although the sanctions are "inherently inhumane and against peace," Rohani said, "nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction have no place in Iran's security and defense doctrine." The usual sharp words against Israel were also absent. A member of Iran's Revolutionary Guard and adviser to Khamenei praised Rohani's speech as "clever and observant."

Iran's 'Heroic Flexibility'

Many are pinning their hopes on two words attributed to Khamenei. Shortly before Rohani's appearance in New York, the revolutionary leader spoke of "heroic flexibility." But contrary to what many in the West assume, the ayatollah was apparently saying that relenting can be advantageous. He was using a metaphor from wrestling, Iran's national sport, when he said that in order to win, one sometimes has to exhibit certain characteristics "for technical reasons" -- malleability and flexibility, for instance. So is it all just a ruse meant to mollify the West only to ultimately triumph against them?

The Iranians' supposed change of course was also met with suspicion, especially in Jerusalem. Rohani had hardly left the podium before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it a "cynical and hypocritical speech." The Israelis play a key role in the Middle East. Without them, there can be no Palestinian state, and an agreement with Iran would be difficult to achieve. Obama cannot reach two of his three goals without the Israelis.

When Obama threatened Syrian despot Bashar Assad with reprisal attacks for his use of chemical weapons more than four weeks ago, Netanyahu said that the "message that is received in Syria will be received loudly in Iran." But the political situation has changed fundamentally since then. Jerusalem feels that by striking a diplomatic deal with Assad, Obama has gambled away his threat potential against Tehran.

Broad Concessions

Which of these views is correct will soon become apparent. The round of negotiations over Iran's nuclear program will take place in Geneva in mid-October, with Zarif slated to head the talks. Russia, China and the West expect Iran to stop enriching uranium beyond 3.5 percent, to convert previously enriched material into reactor fuel rods unusable for bomb-making and, most likely, to close the Fordo enrichment facility near the holy city of Qom. The ability of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna to readily inspect Iran's nuclear plants is a requirement, as is access to its suspicious military facilities, which was previously denied to the IAEA inspectors. In return, Tehran hopes the West will recognize Iran's right to enrich uranium and lift the sanctions.

Rohani promised an agreement in the near future, saying that it should be a matter of "months, not years." On Friday evening, Obama called Rohani for the first time and spoke with him for 15 minutes. The two men tweeted each other afterward, with Rohani expressing his gratitude for Obama's hospitality and the telephone conversation. Obama wished the Iranian a good trip home and apologized for New York's horrible traffic.

Meanwhile, there is talk in Tehran that revolutionary leader Khamenei has given Rohani until the beginning of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, in March to show palpable results. Apparently Iran's willingness to negotiate will end if no progress has been made by then. This would explain Rohani's sense of urgency.

Before he left the General Assembly Hall in New York, Obama turned around to face the audience one more time, as if to make sure that his message had been received. The Iranian delegates were sitting in the second row, on the right, while the Israelis were on the left side of the same row. The Syrians were seated six rows farther back.

The world has listened to Obama. Now it's time to wait for an answer.

[Article 4.](#)

Hurriyet

Glass just half-full in Erdoğan's reform plan

Murat Yetkin

October/01/2013 -- Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan has divided his much-awaited "democratization" package into two: the steps which need

changes in the current legislation through Parliament and those which need only a Cabinet decree or even a letter by a minister to be put into effect. In that sense, the most immediate and net beneficiaries of the package will be women with headscarves who want to have a government job. Other than military and police officers, judges and prosecutors who have official outfits for the job, women in all other public fields, from teachers to defense lawyers, will be able to wear headscarves as a sign of their religious faith in Islam. This has been a sensitive issue, and which was turned into a campaign against the conservative Necmettin Erbakan government in 1996-97 by the military-led secularist bureaucratic establishment. The ruling AK Parti has been under some pressure from its grassroots for some time to provide equal opportunity for those “covered” against those “opens,” with a pinch of revanchist motivation.

Among the immediate beneficiaries, there are Turkish Syriacs who will get their seized estate for the historic Mor Gabriel monastery and the Roma, who will get a Roma Language and Cultural Institute opened at a university.

The rest, which include many important parts of Erdoğan’s package, from the Kurdish issue to changes in the election system, are subject to parliamentary proceedings which could take some time; and since the prime minister did not reveal any schedule, nobody has any idea about the time span.

On the election system, Erdoğan opened up the lowering of the 10 percent election threshold to a public debate with three options: Keeping it as it is, lowering it to 5 percent with a narrowed constituency model or abolishing it altogether with a single-member constituency model. All indications suggest that the second option is likely to be the case. The lowering of the election threshold from 7 to 3 percent to receive financial support from the Treasury is an improvement for the system which could make the BDP, which is focused on the Kurdish problem, happy a bit. Similarly, the adoption of the co-chairman model in the political party law will make the de facto BDP system de jure.

The government also promised to legalize political campaigning by parties in “languages other than Turkish,” which in practice will be used widely by the BDP in Kurdish.

But instead of obligatory primary and secondary education in the Kurdish language as demanded by the BDP, the Erdoğan government vowed to allow non-Turkish education in private schools with certain courses in Turkish under the auspices of the Education Ministry – something that could be regarded as a realistic step so as not to irritate most of the population.

The BDP and Kurdish activists have been awaiting a change in the anti-terrorism law to enable the release of many members of the KCK, the urban wing of the outlawed [Kurdistan Workers' Party](#) (PKK), which is conducting dialogue with the government to end its three-decade-old armed campaign, and which shares the same grassroots with the BDP. That did not happen.

Another disappointment with the government's "democratization package" was the lack of any promises regarding the [Greek Orthodox](#) seminary at Halki despite signals beforehand. There are rumors that recent strong statements by [Greek](#) Foreign Minister Evangelos Venizelos denouncing Turkey as the "invader of Cyprus" might have played a role in removing the item from the package.

Erdoğan said a number of times in his press statement that the "package" was not the last one and there could be more to come, but the biggest disappointment with it was the lack of any improvement regarding the status and demands of Turkey's millions of [Alevi](#) citizens. There had been leaks about the "package" during the last few weeks that cemevis instead of mosques (of the [Sunni](#) or Shite faith) could be acknowledged as the community's place of worship and that they could receive state-sponsored religious benefits from the Religious Affairs Directorate, which operates on the tax revenues of all citizens. But the only modest sentence in Erdoğan's press statement was a promise to change the name of a university to Hacı Bektaş Veli, the 13th-century leader of the faith.

It was hard to call Erdoğan's statement as a press conference, because it was announced minutes before his revelation of the package that no questions would be taken afterwards; some of the national papers and television channels had not been invited for the event anyway.

The package has elements of improvement in the name of democratic life in Turkey, but it is fair to say that it fell short of meeting some of the demands, meaning it is very much a case of the glass only being half-full.

The Christian Science Monitor

How to win the next Mideast war – over water

[Russell Sticklor](#)

September 30, 2013 -- A few decades from now, nations in the Middle East and North Africa could face potentially catastrophic water shortages that could pose an even greater challenge than the upheavals gripping Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, the water crisis over the horizon doesn't receive much serious attention from policymakers, the media, and the public because so many other crises plague the troubled region right now.

Contrary to popular belief, the most important liquid in the Middle East and North Africa isn't the vast supply of oil that brings in billions of dollars every year. It's water, and the scarcity of this vital resource could leave some nations unable to meet the needs of rapidly growing populations in less than 40 years.

The Middle East and North Africa are the world's most water-scarce region. The desert climate and lack of rainfall make people almost entirely dependent on groundwater and the surface waters of the Nile, Jordan, Tigris, and Euphrates Rivers to meet their daily needs for drinking, growing crops, and commercial and industrial projects.

Historically, the region's population has been small enough to get by with a very limited water supply. But since 1950, a sustained population boom has pushed the number of people in the region to about 300 million – nearly as large as the water-rich United States.

A quick look at population figures from a few key countries shows why the region's water stress is certain to intensify during the next few decades.

Syria's population stood at 3.5 million in 1950. The population has since soared to nearly 22 million and is expected to surpass 36 million by 2050. Egypt's 1950 population of 20 million has swelled to almost 85 million in 2013 and is projected to climb past 125 million by mid-century.

Yemen's 1950 population of 4.5 million has now reached 25 million. Despite having one of the lowest per capita water availabilities anywhere on Earth, the nation's population is projected to climb past 52 million by 2050. No one knows where the water to support these growing populations is going to come from. Syria, Egypt, Yemen, and other countries in the region are already using most if not all of the annual renewable water resources they have, both above and below ground.

Climate change is also causing prolonged, intensified droughts in the region. These have destroyed livelihoods and seriously eroded food security, as happened in Syria from 2006 until 2009.

Water access in North Africa and the Middle East is particularly complicated because more than two-thirds of the water flowing into the region from rivers originates elsewhere.

For example, 85 percent of the waters of the Nile flow through the Ethiopian highlands before reaching Egypt. A similar percentage of the Euphrates waters originate in the mountains of Turkey before flowing into Syria and Iraq. Populous downstream nations like Egypt and Iraq are perpetually vulnerable to the water management decisions of their upstream neighbors.

In coming years, population growth and climate change will combine to intensify competition for water resources across North Africa and the Middle East. This will likely escalate tensions within and between countries, even if the region's current conflicts have ended.

The potential for distrust stemming from water sharing across borders is so great that former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali predicted in the late 1980s that future Middle East fighting would be sparked by water disputes, not politics.

While the situation is alarming, it's not hopeless. Conservation measures and technologies can promote and incentivize more sustainable water usage.

For example, water consumption can be cut dramatically if communities recycle more water, improve wastewater treatment, and invest in repairs and upgrades of aging and leaking water and sewer pipelines. Governments should make these actions a high priority, particularly in the region's cities, where large populations in relatively small areas make such improvements especially cost-effective.

In addition, turning sea water into fresh water through desalination may one day become economical, despite the huge amount of energy and high costs required today. If energy costs come down and technology improves, salt water conversion could produce sufficient amounts of fresh water to meet the industrial and household needs of densely populated coastal areas. Water pays no attention to the political, religious, and ideological differences that so bitterly divide the people of the Middle East and North Africa. While it may be too late to avoid the region's looming water crunch outright, nations can soften the landing by more openly communicating with neighboring countries about water management strategies, and acting within their borders to carry out major water infrastructure upgrades and educate their citizens about the pressing need for improved water conservation.

The cost of doing these things will be high – but not as high as the cost of inaction or indifference.

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[Article 6.](#)

Foreign Policy

Egypt looks headed for a dangerous and destabilizing insurgency

Shadi Hamid, Peter Mandaville

September 30, 2013 -- With the world focused on the crisis in Syria and the possibility of a U.S.-Iranian détente, the fact that Egypt's political situation is going from bad to worse has flown under the political radar. Much to the relief of the generals in Cairo -- and likely also some members of U.S. President Barack Obama's Middle East policy team -- the United States appears to be kicking another difficult regional policy decision down the road. This is a mistake. By countenancing the July 3 coup and the military's subsequent crackdown on the supporters of ousted President Mohamed Morsy, the United States may be helping to sow seeds that could ripen into a costly and deeply destabilizing insurgency for years to come. The Obama

administration responded to the military crackdown, which resulted in more than 1,000 deaths, with the diplomatic equivalent of a few light raps on the knuckles of Egypt's generals. It canceled joint military exercises with Egypt and announced that the White House's national security staff would begin a comprehensive review of bilateral aid. Since late August, [a recommendation](#) to suspend the majority of U.S. military assistance to Cairo has been sitting with the president. Meanwhile, Egyptian security forces have re-escalated their campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood, raiding the movement's strongholds and arresting the few remaining senior Brotherhood figures not already in custody. The Obama administration knows that things are not going well in Egypt. U.S. officials -- privately and rather halfheartedly -- tried to walk back Secretary of State John Kerry's [bizarre claim](#) that Egypt's military leaders were "restoring democracy" and have also delayed delivery of F-16 fighters to Egypt. However, Washington's overall response to the undoing of Egypt's democratic process has not come close to matching the gravity of the crisis. The Obama administration's anemic response is indicative of the larger strategic drift of America's response to the 2011 Arab uprisings. In the immediate aftermath of the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia, Obama admitted that the United States had not pushed hard enough for democracy in the Arab world, and he promised a new way of doing business in the region. At arguably every major juncture since then, however, whenever Washington has had the opportunity to demonstrate its support for genuine democracy in Egypt, it has instead opted for some version of the "authoritarian bargain" that characterized U.S. regional policy for decades. Obama's [address](#) at the United Nations last week on Sept. 24 seemed to confirm the reality of American policy. In the world-weary tones that have come to define his speeches, Obama acknowledged in unusually explicit terms that democracy was secondary to Middle East policy and that security concerns and "core interests" would take precedence. The Obama administration appears to be hoping that the Egyptian military, despite its brutality -- or perhaps because of it -- will provide a modicum of stability. This risks repeating the same mistakes of the pre-Arab Spring era: While a [sense of calm](#) has returned to parts of Cairo, the specter of renewed violence still looms large. An insurgency is gathering pace in the Sinai Peninsula, with a [sharp increase](#) in attacks on security personnel after

Morsy's ouster. Meanwhile, the state has lost control of some pro-Morsy strongholds, requiring the use of overwhelming force in the towns of [Dalga](#) and [Kerdasa](#) in an attempt to regain its authority. These flare-ups may prove to be only an initial taste of what's to come. The Algerian civil war, which resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands, offers a cautionary note: The conflict spiraled into full-scale violence not right after the military's January 1992 coup, but at least seven months later. To make matters worse, the new Egyptian government does not appear to aspire to a return to the stagnant ancien régime, but something worse and more dangerous. Unlike Hosni Mubarak's regime -- which tolerated a certain level of dissent in parliament and the media -- this new political order is aiming for a far more all-encompassing grip on power, where even the mildest criticisms of the Egyptian Army can lead one to be branded a traitor. The sort of repression we are seeing today -- including [four mass killings](#) over the summer, one of which was the worst massacre in modern Egyptian history -- will have lasting consequences for Egyptian society. As the New York Times [reported](#) recently, "Neighbors have turned against one another and families have been torn apart" by political divisions. With every passing week, Egypt's authoritarian order entrenches itself even further. On Sept. 23, Egypt's judiciary took yet another dangerous step, [banning](#) not just the Muslim Brotherhood but "all the activities that it participates in and any organization derived from it," as the presiding judge [put it](#). Before this decision, there was the possibility that, while the Brotherhood would be dissolved, its political party, the Freedom and Justice Party, might be permitted to operate. This now seems increasingly unlikely. Instead of waiting for any number of negative scenarios to become a reality, the United States needs to move away from ad hoc crisis management and fundamentally shift its policy on Egypt. There are no quick fixes, but that is no excuse for doing nothing. First, the United States should suspend its military aid to Cairo. It should also outline the conditions under which its support can resume, which should include the reintegration of Morsy's supporters and anti-coup activists in the political process. This would reintroduce some clarity into U.S. policy and signal that foreign assistance to Egypt cannot continue in any form -- reduced, restructured, or otherwise -- under the present circumstances.

To maximize its leverage, Washington should coordinate this shift with its partners in Europe, Japan, and others in the region, such as Turkey and Qatar. Each individual piece of assistance may not sound like much, but taken together, they can have a real impact. Any International Monetary Fund deal for Egypt -- which along with associated grants and commitments could be worth up to [\\$15 billion](#) -- should be premised on tangible political progress involving all key parties. Some Egypt watchers, like former U.S. National Security Council regional director Steven Simon, have [argued](#) that Washington has little leverage because Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries have pledged to replace any shortfall in funding. This is simply not true. Riyadh and its neighbors can replace lost economic aid, but they cannot provide the military equipment and training that [are essential](#) for maintaining Egypt's most advanced tanks and fighter jets. Military-to-military relations between Washington and Cairo have been built over decades and cannot be undone without Egypt incurring considerable and likely prohibitive costs. Saudi Arabia has also [threatened](#) to withhold security cooperation if the United States cuts aid. This is a bluff, and Obama should call the kingdom on it. Riyadh supports the Syrian rebels and backs counterterrorism efforts because such policies are squarely in Saudi Arabia's own interests, not because it's trying to please U.S. officials. It's the United States that has the leverage in this relationship: Saudi Arabia, as well as the United Arab Emirates, is dependent on the U.S. security umbrella, particularly as it relates to the Iranian threat. Ultimately, the United States needs to fundamentally reorder its strategic priorities in Egypt. It must move beyond the mythology of Camp David -- the idea that Washington needs to "buy" peace with Israel from Cairo -- and reject the idea that the Arab world faces a choice between security and democracy. Instead, it should act in accordance with then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's [recognition](#) back in 2011 that "the real choice is between reform and unrest." In the long run, U.S. strategic interests can only be preserved by supporting the emergence of a genuine democracy in Egypt. Countries that are accountable to their citizens are more stable because they offer citizens peaceful, legitimate means of expressing their grievances. The "stability" of authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, is brittle and illusory -- as the revolts in Egypt and Tunisia showed us in the early, euphoric days of the Arab Spring. It is striking how

such lessons, which had once been acknowledged by the Obama administration, can so easily be forgotten. The dangers, meanwhile, are becoming more and more difficult to ignore, whether in the form of authoritarian retrenchment, mounting insurgency, or the loss of Egyptian government control over its own territory. The temptation to look away from the Egyptian train wreck is undeniably powerful, but it is a temptation the United States must resist.

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[Article 7.](#)

Politico

Scientists must spearhead ethical use of big data

Albert-László Barabási

September 30, 2013 -- The recent revelation that the National Security Agency collects the personal data of United States citizens, allies and enemies alike has broken the traditional earning the bond between science and society.

Most breakthrough technologies have dual uses. Think of atomic energy and the nuclear bomb or genetic engineering and biological weapons. This tension never gives way. Our only hope to overcoming it is to stop all research.

But that is unrealistic. Instead, the model we scientists follow is simple: We need to be transparent about the potential use and misuse of our trade. We publish our results, making them accessible to everyone. And when we do

see the potential for abuse, we speak up, urging society to reach a consensus on how to keep the good but outlaw the bad.

As the NSA secretly developed its unparalleled surveillance program, relying on a mixture of tools rooted in computer and social sciences, this model failed. Scientists whose work fueled these advances failed to forcefully articulate the collateral dangers their tools pose. And a political leadership, intoxicated by the power of these tools, failed to keep their use within the strict limits of the Constitution.

It's easy to see why this happened. After all, the benefits of Big Data and the science behind it are hard to overlook. Beyond the many digital applications that make our life increasingly easy today, data science holds promise for emergency response and for stopping the next virus from turning into a deadly pandemic. It also holds the key to our personal health, since our activity patterns and disease history are more predictive of our future disease than our genes.

For researchers involved in basic science, like myself, Big Data is the Holy Grail: It promises to unearth the mathematical laws that govern society at large. Motivated by this challenge, my lab has spent much of the past decade studying the activity patterns of millions of mobile phone consumers, relying on call patterns provided by mobile phone companies. This data was identical to what NSA muscled away from providers, except that ours was anonymized, processed to help research without harming the participants. In a series of research papers published in the journals *Science* and *Nature*, my team confirmed the promise of Big Data by quantifying the predictability of our daily patterns, the threat digital viruses pose to mobile phones and even the reaction people have when a bomb goes off beside them.

We also learned that when it comes to our behavior, we can't use only two scales — one for good and the other for bad. Rather, our activity patterns are remarkably diverse: For any act labeled “unusual” or “anomalous,” such as calling people at odd hours or visiting sensitive locations outside our predictable daily routine, we will find millions of individuals who do just that as part of their normal routine. Hence identifying terrorist intent is more difficult than finding a needle in a haystack — it's more like spotting a particular blade of hay.

Let's face it: Powered by the right type of Big Data, data mining is a weapon. It can be just as harmful, with long-term toxicity, as an atomic bomb. It poisons trust, straining everything from human relations to political alliances and free trade. It may target combatants, but it cannot succeed without sifting through billions of data points scraped from innocent civilians. And when it is a weapon, it should be treated like a weapon.

To repair the damage already done, we researchers, with a keen understanding of the promise and the limits of our trade, must work for a world that uses science in an ethical manner. We can look at the three pillars of nuclear nonproliferation as a model for going forward.

The good news is that the first pillar, the act of nonproliferation itself, is less pertinent in this context: Many of the technologies behind NSA's spying are already in the public domain, a legacy of the openness of the scientific enterprise. Yet the other two pillars, disarmament and peaceful use, are just as important here as they were for nuclear disarmament. We must inspect and limit the use of this new science for military purposes and, to restore trust, we must promote the peaceful use of these technologies.

We can achieve this only in alliance with the society at large, together amending universal human rights with the right to data ownership and the right of safe passage.

Data ownership states that the data pertaining to my activity, like my browsing pattern, shopping habits or reading history, belongs to me, and only I control its use. Safe passage is the expectation that the information I choose to transfer will reach its intended beneficiaries without being tapped by countless electronic ears along the way. The NSA, by indiscriminately tapping all communication pipelines, has degraded both principles.

Science can counteract spying overreach by developing tools and technologies that, by design, lock in these principles. A good example of such a design is the Internet itself, built to be an open system to which anyone could connect without vetting by a central authority. It took decades for governments around the world to learn to censor its openness. This summer, while visiting my hometown in Transylvania, I had the opportunity to talk with a neighbor who spent years as a political prisoner.

Once freed, for decades to come, he knew that everything he uttered was listened to and recorded. He received transcripts of his own communications after the fall of communism. They spanned seven volumes. It was toxic and dehumanizing, a way of life that America has repeatedly denounced and fought against. So why are we beginning to spread communism 2.0 around the world, a quarter-century after the Iron Curtain's collapse? This is effectively what NSA surveillance has become. If we scientists stay silent, we all risk becoming digitally enslaved.

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[Article 8.](#)

The Economist

China in space: How long a reach?

Sep 28th 2013 -- THE Soviet Union in 1961. The United States in 1962. China in 2003. It took a long time for a taikonaut to join the list of cosmonauts and astronauts who have gone into orbit around Earth and (in a few cases) ventured beyond that, to the Moon. But China has now arrived as a space power, and one mark of this has been the International Astronautical Federation's decision to hold its 64th congress in Beijing. The congress, which is attended by representatives of all the world's space agencies, from America and Russia to Nigeria and Syria, is a place where eager boffins can discuss everything from the latest in rocket design and the effects of microgravity on the thyroid to how best an asteroid might be mined and how to weld metal for fuel tanks.

All useful stuff, of course. But space travel has never been just about the science. It is also an arm of diplomacy, and so the congress serves too as a place where officials can exchange gossip and announce their plans. And that was just what Ma Xingrui, the head of the China National Space Administration (CNSA) and thus, in effect, the congress's host, did. He confirmed that an unmanned lunar mission, Chang'e 3, will be launched in the first half of December. This means, if all goes well, that before the year

is out a Chinese rover will roam the surface of the Moon. It will collect and analyse samples of lunar regolith (the crushed rock on the Moon's surface that passes for soil there). It will make some ultraviolet observations of stars. And it will serve to remind the world that China intends—or at least says it intends—to send people to the Moon sometime soon as well.

Mr Ma also confirmed that China plans to build a permanent space station by 2020. Such manned stations are expensive and scientifically useless, as the example of the largely American International Space Station (ISS), currently in orbit, eloquently demonstrates. But they do have diplomatic uses, and that was why Mr Ma reiterated in his speech that foreign guests will be welcome on board his station—in contradistinction to the ISS's rather pointed ban on taikonauts—though any visitors will first have to learn Chinese. What he did not do, though, was comment on the aspect of China's space programme that most concerns outsiders, namely exactly how militarised it is.

One Chinese rover

Most space programmes are military to some extent. Both America and the Soviet Union used modified missiles to launch their satellites and spacemen in the early days. And even in the days of the Space Shuttle, NASA was employing that device to put spy satellites into orbit, and recover them. For China's space effort these still are the early days, so civilian and military applications remain intertwined.

In July, for example, the CNSA launched a trio of satellites, allegedly as part of a project to clean up space near Earth by removing orbital debris. Such debris is indeed a problem, given the number of launches that have happened since the hoisting of Sputnik in 1957. Nor did China itself help when, during the testing of an anti-satellite weapon in 2007, it blew one of its own redundant satellites into about 150,000 pieces. So a charitable view might be that this mission was a piece of contrition. Cynics, however, suspect that what was actually launched was another type of antisatellite weapon—or, at most, a piece of dual-use technology which could act as a space-sweeper as well.

One of the newly launched probes was indeed equipped with a robotic arm of the sort that might pick up space litter. The other two were, the story went, to stand in for bits of debris. But once initial tests were over, the satellite with the robotic arm made a number of unusual manoeuvres and

approached not one of the devices it was launched with, but rather an ageing satellite in a different orbit—just the sort of behaviour that would be useful if you wanted to eliminate an observation or communication satellite belonging to another country.

The Chinese are not the only ones working on space weaponry, of course. America is busy in the field, too. And that accounted for a slightly more desolate atmosphere at the meeting than is normal at astronomical congresses. American law prohibits NASA from collaborating with China, or even organising bilateral exchanges with it. That rather kiboshed the plethora of booths the agency would normally have brought to the party, particularly when it is celebrating the activities of a rover of its own—Curiosity, its fourth and largest roaming the surface of Mars.

This did not stop NASA's boss, Charles Bolden, addressing the conference, though. And more pertinently, Mr Bolden also had a note from Congress letting him off the legal leash so that, though he still could not talk with Mr Ma or his colleagues at the CNSA, he could at least meet members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences to discuss matters of mutual interest. These matters included using satellites to study Earth itself—the most useful part of space science. But it would be surprising if the question of how to clean up space litter had not somehow come up too.